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ABSTRACT

Individualized education works well for a particular type of student and faculty member. If you go beyond this type of student and faculty member, you run head-on into serious administrative and planning problems. In short, students are unsure and often confused about their role in individualized education. It seems that (1) students need thorough introductions to individualized programs -- what it's like to be a student in such a program, and maybe opportunities to practice before the program actually begins; (2) faculty need more varied and creative ways, beyond sink-or-swim, to learn their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities; and (3) individualized education programs need clarification as to content, structure, and process. Fundamentally, these findings suggest that if institutions want to work with a wide range of student types and backgrounds, it may require substantial investment of time and energy in faculty development and student preparation. (Author/KE)

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ADMINISTERING INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION

Questions, Issues, Suggestions

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Who's Been Saying What About It?

There's quite a body of literature, experience, and research work emerging that bears on the general topic of individualized education. I'm going to use I.E. in a fairly restrictive way later on, but let's look now at a somewhat broader literature base. A variety of unconventional programs are popping up around the United States and in other countries as well (Conference on Future Structures of Post-Secondary Education, 1973, pp. 111-117). A recent study conducted in the United States concludes that "...nontraditional programs more often constitute new ways of teaching old subjects to new students rather than new subjects as such." (Ruyle, p.71) Of the 641 programs surveyed, 70 percent were designed for nontraditional students; 67 percent were carried out at nontraditional locations; 57 percent used nontraditional methods; and 48 percent offered nontraditional content. Only 20 percent of these programs were considered to be distinctive in all four ways. Examples of this category include the affiliates of University Without Walls, many of the external degree programs which offer a bachelor of liberal or general studies degree, and those that offer a regular baccalaureate degree for studies beyond the traditional course offerings.

Let's look briefly at the range of problems experienced by 641 nonconventional programs. Ruyle (1974, p.87) reports the following:

Lack of funds	41%	No evident demand or need for such developments	15%
Difficulty in assessing nonclassroom learning	40	Recruitment of appropriate faculty	13
Concern about academic standards	34	Recruitment of students	12
Faculty resistance	32	Inadequate preparation of students	12
Budget based on FTE units	25	Lack of interest among constituency	12
Lack of interest within the institution	21	Accreditation	10
Suspicion of passing fad	20	Licensing and certification	9
Lack of approved examination or other assessment techniques	19	Employers' concerns about graduates' qualifications	7
Acceptance of graduates into advanced education or graduate schools	18	Other	6
		No response (no problems?)	15

The two major problems are lack of funds and difficulty in assessing nonclassroom learning. A greater proportion of universities than colleges reported four key problems - shortage of funds, assessment of nonclassroom learning, concern about academic standards, and faculty resistance.

Mayhew (1974, pp.85-90) recently summarized his observations about independent study and its principal forms. Although the concept is used in many ways, four broad categories of independent study emerge in practice: First, independent work as part of a course, or specifically designed independent study courses, or special groupings of students with a problem focus; second, independent study with a great deal more structure such as individual paced study arrangements; third, interim period - a month in the middle of the year when students leave campus and work on their own; and fourth, the use of examinations to assign academic credit for competencies developed by any means. Major problems are associated with the different

independent study forms, such as faculty reluctance to grant academic credit for nonclassroom work, difficulty in deciding which independent study experience warrants academic credit, deep feelings of frustration by students as well as feeling short-changed, isolated from peers, and finding difficulty in maintaining interest and motivation. Mayhew goes on to say, "Institutions which assume that independent study is an inexpensive way for coping with student needs can be assured that the resultant programs will not be effective. If independent study is not the programmed sort, considerable resources must be deployed for the preparation of programs... While there is much serendipity in the educational process, educational gains are really not free."

Cy Houle (1973, pp.124-172) presents and discusses twenty-one questions or specific problems in his study of the external degree. Some of these questions focus on problems that confront designers of external degree programs in individual institutions, such as: type of clientele, degree content and structure, finances, faculty interest and support, and new job requirements of faculty. Many other questions, however, concern problems of general policy, that is expressions of national concern with external degrees.

And studies by Levien and associates of emerging technologies and their use in instruction reveal a "state of the art" with several complicating characteristics: experience differs from place to place, there are many capacities as yet unexercised, and a large number of individual judgments is required to obtain a complete picture of technological uses. In summary, "the picture that emerges is one of a technology poised on the edge of fruitfulness, held back not so much by limitations of its technique as by limitation of the institutions that must provide for its use. Until means to facilitate the production and distribution of instructional materials

develop, the computer's full instructional potential is not likely to be achieved." (Levien, 1972, p.126)

These are some of the major studies of new forms and emphases in post-secondary education. Collectively, they pose a bewildering array of questions and issues, many of which speak directly to the problem and challenge of providing and promoting individualized education (I.E.). What follows in this essay is an effort to define I.E., to provide a conceptual framework for viewing key clusters of related problems, and to recommend ways that administrators, planners, and faculty may promote effective I.E.

Do I Have Anything To Add

Jack Forbes in commenting on DQU hits the nail on the head in describing individualized education:

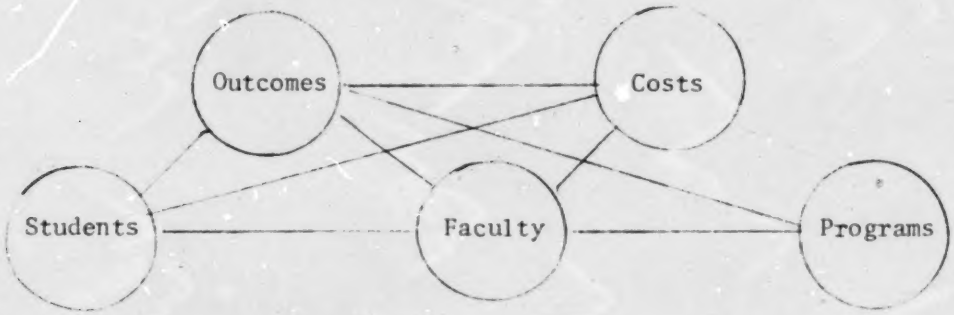
> The important thing about education is that an individual has to develop himself and make key decisions himself... At DQ...an individual works out his own program and where he can stay with something, if he wants to, until he masters it. The important thing is individual accomplishment, not the time spent. If one student can do something in two years, that's fine. If it takes somebody else four years, that's fine too. When he's ready, we'll test his mastery of the subject - perhaps by an oral exam, a written exam, or something else... The key to DQ is its emphasis on meeting each student where he is -- and then helping him get where he wants to go. (Janssen, 1974, p.126)

By individualized education, I mean three things: one, "education" begins by assessing the interests and needs of individual students - where they've been, what they know, their attitudes and values, where and how they want their education to proceed from this point on; second, an individual degree program is designed and developed based on student prior learnings, his/her educational goals, and general program and/or institutional/system expectations; and third, further

learning, which includes but is not limited to implementing one's degree program, occurs primarily on an individual basis. Thus, individualized education as used here is included in but is not as broad as Ruyle's or Houle's schema and clearly broader than Mayhew's discussion of independent study. Examples of individualized education probably include: many of the Union's UWW programs, MMSC, Johnston College, Antioch-Putney, Goddard (adult degree program), etc.

Many problems and issues cited in recent essays and studies of external degrees, extended degree programs, or nontraditional studies apply to individualized education. In addition to these are special problems of individualized education--students as independent learners, faculty as facilitators of learning, and education tailored to individual student needs--which have major administrative, structural, and planning implications.

The above definition of I.E. may be further developed as follows: (Palola, et al, 1974, chapter 1)



Student Types

In this scheme, "students" are typed according to three variables: clarity of their educational and personal objectives - richness of their academic and related background resources, and ability to function as a self-disciplined, independent learner (Quinn and Sellers, 1974, p.37). Different combinations of these

variables yield for me: the "Industrialist" - this student will succeed in I.E., and in probably any program; the "Neophyte" - this person will struggle in I.E., maybe half will succeed; the "Pioneer" - he/she maybe will make it; and the "Explorer" - low on all three variables, and thus very unlikely to succeed. Thus, I hypothesize that:

> I.E. works best (easiest?) for students with clear objectives, rich resources, and independent learning styles.

But, how many students now coming to colleges and universities have these "desired" characteristics? On clear objectives from SEQ (Student Experience Questionnaire) data, 65 percent of students at Empire State College reported they had definite learning objectives when they enrolled and another 30 percent reported they had objectives but that they were not very clear. So the vast majority had clear and specific objectives.

With the average age of ESC students at 37, 60 percent of the students employed full time and 80 percent having some previous college experience (usually 2 years), these students have a fund of occupational, educational, and life experience to draw upon that is quite different from other students. This kind of experience suggests rich resources and is translated into high advanced standing awards for the majority of students.

And, about one-third of the students were classified as highly independent learners (mentors serve as resource coordinators). This group--clear goals, rich resources, and independent learners--reported that the College influenced them to a greater extent regarding cognitive and developmental outcomes and they evaluated their contract learning experiences as more effective than the other groups. Thus,

those students with an independent learning style do experience the college differently--in the direction of the college objectives. (Lehmann, AAHE paper, 1975)

What these findings suggest is that a good match between students and faculty minimizes administrative and planning problems. Students design and implement their academic work with faculty guidance and counsel, but they avoid creating unnecessarily heavy and time-consuming work load demands on faculty and other staff. Many independent learners, as one ESC mentor states, "...are well out of the starting blocks when we see them; the best we can do is to make a few suggestions, but mainly get out of their way."

But what about the majority of students not blessed with clear goals, resources, and independence... what happens to them? How well do they fair in I.E.? What must they learn to succeed? How will needed socialization occur? Now I admit that not many folks learn these skills and attitudes in most high schools or conventional colleges and universities. Instead, they arrive at I.E. with long years in apprenticeship as dependent learners.

Does this mean that students who have vague goals, lean resources, and dependent learning styles will not succeed in I.E.?

Are there ways to teach students to sharpen goals and to work independently prior to enrollment in I.E.?

By comparison to independent learners, dependent learners may require more services, more resources, and greater attention by faculty (Debus, 1975). Administrators will need to take these factors into consideration in discussions of faculty work load and the assignment of different types of students to faculty with different backgrounds, interests, and skills. And planners will have to spend increasing amounts of time monitoring the success of current arrangements and designing new and varied resource plans for dependent versus independent learners.

Faculty Types

"Faculty," too, may be typed according to certain characteristics, such as: willingness and ability to engage in program planning, contract design, counseling, developing instructional resources versus instruction, evaluating student work, and professional development. Faculty high on the first four may be labeled "learning facilitators," whereas faculty high on the latter three are performing more like "tutors." (Bradley, AAHE paper, 1975)

HYPOTHESIS: "Facilitator" type faculty will have more success with a broader range of student types than will "tutors" in I.E. programs.

But

Are many faculty willing to shuck traditional/conventional habits - lecturing, seminaring, publishing - in exchange for a facilitator-like life?

Where do/can faculty learn to be facilitators? What role does/can graduate schools play? What are I.E. programs doing to recruit and orient faculty to facilitator roles?

What kinds of professional development activities are needed and when? How does one think about work load, work load standards, and evaluation for renewal, tenure, and promotion?

Preliminary data at ESC suggest we have a rich mixture of facilitator- and tutor-type faculty. Heavy work load experiences, however, are more likely to be reported among "tutor" types, though work load is not statistically related to an overall index of satisfaction. Also, as mentioned earlier, students working

with facilitator-type faculty at ESC reported more cognitive and affective development and evaluated their contract learning experiences as more effective than students working primarily with tutors.

I submit that the proportion of faculty in I.E. programs who can effectively function as "learning facilitators" is inadequate to meet student needs and program characteristics. So, we've got another major and central problem to solve if I.E. is to succeed.

Program Types

There are multiple ways of viewing "programs." In many contemporary colleges and universities, we see faculty dominated curricula, rigid grading practices, generalized academic standards, scheduled classes, and campus-based instruction locked to current administrative habits. Increasing concern can be found in some of these institutions with interdisciplinary studies, experiential/community-based learning, and computer assisted instruction. Still, however, individual education remains relatively rare. For me, an "individualized" program meets student needs, interests, and objectives by:

- being where he/she lives
- using existing community and other learning resources
- building on his/her background and objectives--in short, the programs take the student where he/she wants to go
- moving students at their own pace
- evaluating work according to the student's objectives

Quickly (without presenting full arguments and evidence), I'd like to hypothesize that:

I.E. programs are extremely difficult to launch and maintain due to current administrative habits, traditional bureaucratic needs, faculty reluctance, and the general conservatism within higher education.

And/or

Individualized programs best succeed with "Industrialist" and "Neophyte" students working with "facilitator" type faculty.

But this analysis raises many questions:

How are existing or available community and other resources for learning effectively tapped and deployed?

How does one examine student prior learning, apply findings to student plans, and gain acceptance of needed criteria and procedures?

What kinds and sizes of various organizational units are needed for such functions as: reception and guidance, diagnosis and evaluation, learning and assessment, budgeting and personnel, etc. - and how do these diverse parts with diverse agendi relate?

I've used the terms "best," "succeed," etc., in the discussion and statement of hypotheses. Let me clarify what I have in mind here. For me, "success" equals the accomplishment of pre-stated goals in a financial and humanly sensible (reasonable, feasible) way. Thus, in my approach, it is essential to monitor (this can be done in numerous ways) what's going on in individualized education, and then use the information and insight to plan, structure, and administer the

program. New individualized education programs must be built based on monitored experience elsewhere, i.e., other individualized education programs; and ongoing, operating programs must monitor their own successes and failures (Lindquist, 1975).

How Can Students Better Learn Their Role in I.E.?

I suggested earlier that I.E. programs don't necessarily attract or admit students with backgrounds that make it easier for the institution. All students aren't "industrialists" or "neophytes" - in fact, there are a lot of "pioneers" and "explorers" around. We don't know much about these folks and don't know how to prepare them for I.E. My impression is that too many I.E. programs are so hell bent in building up FTE's (or its equivalent) that little time and energy is spent learning about their students - who we attract, who do we turn off, what do they want, what makes them tick, how can we get them ready for I.E.?

What I'm saying is that possibly I.E. isn't suited to all types of students and secondly, much more attention must be given to preparing students for I.E. After all, consider what most people have gone through before they get to us - structured, pre-set, other determined, I-teach-you-learn educational systems. And now, in I.E. we say (or try to say) you are the important subject, it's what you want that's important, we're not going to lay our view of what's "right and beautiful" on you. Answer me this: How many students are really prepared to handle this new stance, new approach, new whatever?

I'd like to propose to you that I.E. planners and administrators must think about designing and developing, what I'll now call "meeting centers," places where students in a relaxed manner are introduced to themselves, to your I.E. programs and to the kinds of people (including presently enrolled students) they'll likely be working with, if they decide to join up. Let's be a bit more specific about the functions of "meeting centers." As I see it, they look like this:

1. One big room, a few tables, chairs, books, gadgets.
2. Inhabited by people - potential students, current students, facilitators, maintenance folks (bookkeepers, assessors, monitors, etc.).
3. Opportunities for students to "test" themselves, the program, and others regarding their own background, current objectives, interest and commitment.
4. As a result of these experiences, students know something about what the life of an independent learner is, what their objectives are, how facilitators can work with them, what kinds of problems they'll likely experience, what learning resources are available to them, and what they now know that will be used as a base to build from in their I.E. program.

Edward Angus (1974, p.79) discusses a similar problem in evaluating experiential learning. Starting with Kiel's (1972) work which substantiates that the clearer the learning objectives the greater the likelihood of a personally and intellectually fulfilling experience as a student, Angus states:

> In order that students will know what is expected of them, what will be evaluated and how, and will be helped to maximize the learning potential available through the field experience a prefield orientation is valuable. One means is a workshop that stresses such themes as problem-solving techniques, failure expectation level, or decision-making skills. Another way is to assemble written, audio, and video materials in a learning resources center on subjects such as those just mentioned. A third approach is curricular...
>
> The importance of prefield preparation to the evaluative process is that students can be expected to derive certain skills and knowledge as well as realistic expectations of the field experience. Final evaluations concerning field performance can then be made in light of the prefield training.

Concern for the socialization of I.E. students must not stop with meeting places. Continuing plans and programs must occur to respond to new problems faced by students as they gain experience with I.E. A variety of activities might handle this need: periodic, short-term, intensive residential workshops, alumni organization and activities, newspapers/periodicals/magazines, group studies, etc. Thus a variety of peer group substitutes are possible and necessary to take I.E. socialization forward.

The clear implication of this analysis is the necessity to commit resources--faculty, planners, coordinators, counselors--to the peculiar needs, demands, and potentials of I.E. These provisions may cost money, but experience so far indicates how essential several of these conditions may be. One-to-one discussions between students and faculty are costly and time-consuming, but essential. Special budget resources to experiment and examine alternatives are basic.

The Faculty Role-What Does It Take and How Does One Learn It?

Faculty face new tasks and responsibilities in I.E. and this necessitates some new ways of thinking about their role(s), work load, and professional career. Some insights and suggestions exist in such sources as Ralph and Freedman (1973, pp.69-82), and Freeman (1973, pp.31-36). Such activities as facilitating the design of learning contracts and the development of portfolios for advanced standing are experiences with many new problems and issues. In addition faculty must think more creatively about various ways and resources available to student learning beyond the more familiar classroom setting and lecture method. The question is where and how to learn these diverse skills and abilities.

Most faculty are well experienced and fully exposed to the familiar forms of education in HLI's - set degree requirements, prescribed courses, lecturing,

focusing on oneself as the fountain and foundation of facts, knowledge, and learning. Faculty, most of them, still function as gas station attendants - pumping facts into empty tanks, changing engine oil and lubricating rusting parts, tinkering and tuning ailing machinery - and students receive products currently in the tanks or on the shelves. The reward structure for faculty follows, and in familiar and conventional ways. The number of cars, sorry, students serviced - or in academic parlance, the SCH's produced - is a ruling, dominating criterion. In some institutions you, as faculty, must also sell/produce appropriate sales/publications of accessories/articles, books, monographs.

On a more serious level, important steps must be taken by administrators and planners to provide opportunities for faculty to learn about their new role in I.E. Some graduate schools may focus on this type of faculty training. We must in higher education be prepared to reorient most, some, a few graduate schools to the new role(s) of faculty in individualized educational programs. This step should orient prospective faculty to the changing conditions and new demands of many HLI's to practice individualized education.

Second, some kind of training center might be established to move faculty from more conventional/traditional programs into I.E. We must in higher education be prepared to found, what I'll call "transition centers" - possibly located outside current HLI's - to retrain and provide new career education for "old" faculty looking toward "new" careers in individualized education institutions. Such training sensitizes faculty to individual student style/attitude/skill profiles. It sensitizes faculty also to alternative ways of designing and developing programs, learning experiences for individual students. It teaches faculty alternative forms of learning and the use of alternative learning resources. It helps new faculty struggle through evaluation strategies and techniques appropriate to individual learners. I.E. institutions may form consortia to share experiences and profit by exchange of faculty.

Third, internships in I.E. might be offered to persons fresh out of graduate school. And I.E. programs may wish to provide their own on-the-job or in-service training. We must be prepared in higher education to provide orientation opportunities for faculty entering individualized education programs and institutions. Even armed with background and training in transition centers, faculty will need special sessions and seminars to learn about unique features, resources, and other opportunities at individual institutions. As suggested earlier, faculty perform new roles in individualized education and respond to new reward structures. Learning these roles in particular programs and institutions focused on individualized education is essential. A strong approach could be made by combining a general exposure to I.E. with ongoing training in particular I.E. programs.

A second main issue regarding faculty in I.E. is the amount of work they do and the possibility of "burn-out." Little has been written yet about ways to measure faculty effort in I.E. or to provide guidelines about "normal" or "average" loads. At ESC, we've measured faculty effort across eleven areas such as program planning, contract design, evaluation, instruction, student counseling, etc. (Bradley, 1975) Our surveys show "mentors" spend about 70 percent of their time in relationships with their students, 20 percent in relationships with colleagues, 8 percent in college-wide activities, and the remaining 2 percent in such personal activiteis as professional development. This comprehensive view of work effort and activities is much more preferable and valid in I.E. programs than the familiar student/faculty ratio. In connection with work load, it is necessary to study the so-called "burn-out" phenomenon among I.E. faculty. Steeped with something approaching three times the paperwork load of "normal" programs, the psychological exhaustion from one-to-one work with students, and the general anxieties of innovative programs, I.E.

faculty frequently complain of overwork, no time to recharge their batteries, and of falling behind in their own field. Opportunities for "shut-down" like a month with no student appointments, change of pace through professional reassignments, and similar arrangements are essential to faculty welfare, morale, and effectiveness. Hodgkinson (1973, p.115) recently said, "... evaluation should be designed to assist the person in improving his performance. Be that person a student or a teacher. My impression, however, is that most current evaluation systems work primarily to reject people rather than help them attain improved performance."

A third issue for I.E. faculty is professional and career development. Much like we study student learning and personal development through college, a new axis of evaluating I.E. is the faculty. What kinds of faculty stay or leave? How do they best learn their new job? What happens to collegial relationships in their professional field? What happens to their attitudes about I.E., work, satisfaction, long-term career plans, and skills in using a variety of learning resources not previously known or used by them? Answers to these questions should have consequences for policies and practices about faculty recruitment, and renewal, promotion and tenure. Hodgkinson's (1974) recent paper on adult development and its implications for faculty provides one interesting way to frame the problem.

I.E. Programs-Ambiguities, Uncertainties, Conflicts -- How Do We Make It Better?

Lastly, I'd like to spend a little time looking at the I.E. program itself - base of information needed about studynts, the degree of flexibility and control over the program, and provisions for building and maintaining quality of the program. Effectively planned and administered individualized learning programs for students require a sizeable data and knowledge base about its students - his/her background,

attitudes about education, his/her educational aims and objectives, and some important information about his/her personality, personal habits, skills, and competencies. I would imagine that not much of these data are collected and made available to faculty; thus, there's probably a lot of "flying by the seat of our pants" going on in many programs. We must be prepared in higher education to build programs and learning experiences tailored to student interests and needs. Considerable "hard" and "soft" data must be collected about students and used in program design. Armed with these data, more efficient and effective use can also be made of various learning resources - computers, internships, tutors, tapes, demonstrations, and residencies. Much of the data suggested here can be gathered at the "meeting places" described earlier, as well as through ongoing monitoring of student work and experiences. Students could probably self-administer many tests, complete appropriate questionnaires, and tape responses to prepared questions.

Next, an issue may likely arise between I.E. program staff and various "external" agencies (like governing boards, systemwide administration, state education departments) regarding the nature of the program. At a general level, conversations take place and sometimes disputes arise over how much structure is necessary or required. Specific issues emerge regarding such items as the programs offered, the liberal arts component, distribution requirements, and areas of degree concentration. The issue often boils down to one of more structure being imposed by outsiders than is viewed healthy by persons inside the program. "Premature closure" becomes the watchword among insiders, whereas outsiders criticize I.E. for its lack of quality which in turn brings about the need for imposing structure. Outsiders may include state education departments, government boards, budget offices, and legislative committees. This may lead to compromises where I.E. programs generate and communicate structure(s), but daily practice of I.E. basically ignores this structure.

When this dilemma appears, we must be prepared in higher education to speak clearly and succinctly to the merits of individualized education and costs needed to support such activities. These data, collected systematically and longitudinally, are used to inform various external audiences about the value and worth of new educational offerings.

In addition to student data needs and degree definitions, a third area and issue requires additional thought and close scrutiny by academic administrators. Here I am talking about academic quality. ESC has expressed concern about and has taken steps to cope with the question and problem since day one. A committee was appointed, met for a year, and issued concepts and guidelines. But we, like nearly all higher learning institutions, have now no official document on academic quality. Let me make this suggestion: don't turn away from the issue, assign and charge appropriate institutional bodies to deliberate the issue, and give special recognition to signs and symptoms of quality, like well-conceived and well-designed learning contracts, digests and evaluations, portfolios of prior learnings, individualized degree programs, and the like.

So What Have We Learned From This?

Basic thing we know is that I.E. works well for a particular type of student and faculty member, i.e., "industrialist" and "neophyte." If you go beyond this type of student and faculty member, you run head-on into serious administrative and planning problems. In short, students are unsure and often confused about their role in I.E.; faculty are not trained in graduate institutions or other settings to perform unfamiliar roles as "resource persons" or "facilitators of learning"; and uncertainty and conflict emerge over basic definitions of content and structural arrangements of alternative delivery systems for I.E.

If these are more or less reasonable assertions, where do we go from here? It seems to me that (1) students need thorough introductions to I.E. programs - what it's like to be a student in such a program, maybe opportunities to practice, before programs begin; (2) faculty need more varied and creative ways - beyond sink-or-swim - to learn their respective roles, responsibilities, and opportunities; and (3) I.E. programs need clarification as to content, structure, and process. Fundamentally, these findings suggest that if institutions want to work with a wide range of student types and backgrounds, it may require substantial investment of time and energy in faculty development and student preparation.

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